recent Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan, India conveyed its readiness to build economic and trade relations based on mutual benefits.

[Translation]

Handloom Societies

585. SHRI MAHABIR LAL BISHVAKARMA : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the Handloom Societies being run by the Government in North Chhotanagpur and South Chhotanagpur;

(b) the amount of assistance provided to them during 1995–96 and 1996–97; and

(c) the number of weavers being benefited therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) No handloom societies in North and South Chhotanagpur are run by the Government. Several Cooperative Societies are however, working in the area as members of the Chhotanagpur Regional Handloom Weavers Cooperative Union Ltd., Ranchi.

(b) The amount of assistance provided to these societies during the year 1995–96 & 1996–97 is Rs. 19.84 lakhs and Rs. 16,000 respectively.

(c) Approximately 2000 weavers have benefitted during the years 1995–96 & 1996–97 with the above assistance.

Economic Reforms Programme

586. SHRIMATI KETAKI DEVI SINGH :
KUMARI UMA BHARATI :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under the consideration of the Government to include poverty eradication programme in economic reforms progrmmes;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the time by which a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (c) Growth with social justice has always been one of the basic objectives of our planning over the years. Government has adopted a multi-thrust approach with many anti-poverty, social welfare and employment generation programmes. The Common Minimum Programme (CMP) announced by the Government in July, 1996, underpins the strong commitment of the government to the development of social sectors for achieving distributive justice. This commitment is reflected in the increase in Central Government plan and non-plan allocations for social services as a ratio of GDP at market prices which has risen to a record high at 1.19 per cent for the last two years, i.e. 1997–98 (BE) and 1996–97(BE). An additional amount of Rs. 3300 crores of Central assistance to States and Union Territories has also been allocated in the 1997–98 Budget for expenditure on basic minimum services.

[English]

Meeting on Slow Growth Rate

587. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :
SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO :
SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY :

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister called the meeting of the Industrialists during October 1997 to discuss the slow growth rate;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith number of Industrialists attended the meeting;

(c) the main topics discussed at the meeting alongwith the decisions arrived at;

(d) whether tapping of telephone was a major issue discussed at the meeting; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir. The meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister on 14.10.97 with the industrialists of manufacturing sectors to discuss issues influencing the performance and competitiveness of the Indian Industry. 57 industrialists attended the meeting.

(c) to (e) During the meeting, issues relating to various sectors including cement, automobile, capital goods, paper/newsprint, leather, steel, textiles, electronics/ software were discussed and decisions taken on relevant issues such as constitution of a small group to look into the rationalisation of duty structure for import of capital goods, particularly in the context of Zero Duty Import; encouraging house construction activity not only to augment the housing stock but also to give the needed push to other core sectors of the economy; preparing a new people-friendly, eco-friendly and industry-friendly forest policy; to review the pace of public investment in key sectors like power, oil, coal, telecom, road, etc.

Performance of Manufacturing Sector

588. SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state

(a) whether the Prime Minister has assured that the pace of the public sector spending on infrastructure is likely to be reviewed and an Inter-ministerial group set up to examine problems faced by the capital goods sector owning to easier imports;

(b) if s, the details thereof;

(c) whether Prime Minister after having the meeting with the industrialists, announced a number of measures to stimulate demand and ensure a sharp upturn in the performance of the manufacturing sector during the rest of the financial year; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b) In the meeting held under Chairmanship of Prime Minister on 1.10.97 with industrialists on manufacturing sectors, it was decided to constitute a small group to examine issues of rationalisation of duty structure for import of capital goods and to review the pace of public investment in key sectors.

(c) and (d) During the meeting, issues relating to various sectors including cement, automobile, capital goods, paper/newsprint, leather, steel, textiles electronics/ software were discussed and decisions taken on relevant issues such as constitution of a small group to look into the rationalisation of duty structure for import of capital goods, particularly in the context of Zero Duty Import; encouraging house construction activity not only to augment the housing stock but also to give the needed push to other core sectors of the economy; preparing a new people-friendly, eco-friendly and industry-friendly forest policy; to review the pace of public investment in key sectors like power, oil, coal telecom, road, etc.

NABARD Loan for Houses

589. SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the NABARD proposes to introduce any new housing schemes for Weaker Sections; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is the apex financial institution for, inter-alia, providing refinance to banks for agriculture and allied activities. Housing finance has not been taken up by NABARD so far and as such they have no proposal.

Subsidy on Non-Merit Goods

590. SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS :
KUMARI UMA BHARTI :
SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA MEHTA :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to withdraw the subsidy given on non-merit goods;

(b) if so, the details of such non-merit goods on which subsidy is likely to be withdrawn;

(c) the reasons behind taking such a decision;

(d) the impact of withdrawal of subsidy on common man; and

(e) the amount being incurred by the Government annually as subsidy and the items on which this amount is spent?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.

(e) A statement is attached.

Statement

Details of Subsidies

(In crores of rupees)

		Actuals 1988-89	Actuals 1989-90	Actuals 1990-91	Actuals 1991-92	Actuals 1992-93	Actuals 1993-94	Actuals 1994-95	Actuals 1995-96	Revised 1996-97	Budget 1997-98
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	A. Major Subsidies	6787	9032	9581	9793	9414	10764	11527	12128	14233	17130
1.	Food	2200	2476	2450	2850	2800	5537	5100	5377	4066	7500
2.	Indigenous (Urea) Fertiliser	3000	3771	3730	3500	4800	3800	4075	4300	4743	5240